



NURSING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



\$17.3M

Federal HRSA funding at VUSN, FY 2019–FY 2023

\$8.1M

Advanced Nursing Education Grants, FY 2019–FY 2023

\$3.2M

Nurse Faculty Loan Program, FY 2019–FY 2023

\$1M

Nurse Education Practice, Quality and Retention Grants

School of Nursing increasing diversity in health care providers

To meet the need for more health care providers, Vanderbilt University School of Nursing has a series of targeted workforce programs supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration. With one such program, funded by a \$3.2 million grant, VUSN created a scholarship program for family nurse practitioner, nurse-midwifery and dual nurse-midwifery/family nurse practitioner master’s students to increase diversity in primary health care providers, particularly in medically underserved areas. The program provides students from disadvantaged backgrounds with scholarships, support and education tailored for work in rural or underserved areas.

Additionally, its nurse practitioner residency program has financially supported and assisted over 15 post-graduate nurse practitioner fellows, including three psychiatric-mental health and 12 family nurse practitioners. Fellows received advanced educational content focused on marginalized populations, innovative population management strategies and clinical quality improvement. They provided medical care to thousands of underserved patients in Tennessee, working with Federally Qualified Health Centers. HRSA has renewed its commitment, pledging an additional \$2.8 million over the next four years, recognizing the program’s significant impact.

The program is expanding its reach by including midwifery and women’s health specialty fellows, aligning with VUSN’s mission to enhance comprehensive care and address a broader spectrum of health care needs. The program underscores dedication to raising the standard of care in underserved communities and nurturing the growth of nurse practitioner leaders.

Maternity Care Nursing Workforce Expansion Training Program

VUSN received a 2023 \$4 million HRSA grant to increase and diversify the nurse-midwife workforce as a means of improving maternal health and increase access to care. The school will use the Maternity Care grant for the Midwifery-Education—Access and Diversity for Optimizing Workforce program, which will educate nurse-midwifery students with a specialized curriculum and community-based clinical experiences focused on providing care in rural and underserved communities. Research has shown that highly trained certified nurse-midwives can address nationwide maternity care shortages and improve maternal and neonatal outcomes. Vanderbilt’s MEADOW program will equip nurse-midwifery students for practice in rural or underserved communities and recruit nurse-midwifery students from diverse backgrounds.

Supporting future nursing faculty

VUSN received a \$1.52 million grant from the HRSA Nurse Faculty Loan Program to support students interested in becoming nursing faculty members. The program aims to respond to the need for more doctorally prepared faculty in nursing schools. Thousands of qualified students are turned away from nursing programs due to a lack of faculty. Vanderbilt has produced more than 300 graduates who have participated in the NFLP in the last 20 years by growing its Doctor of Nursing Practice and Post-Master’s Certificate in Nursing Education programs.

Community Health Worker Training Program

VUSN has made significant progress in establishing the Community Health Worker Training Program backed by a \$3 million grant from HRSA. The program is designed for non-nurses and aims to improve community health in underserved communities in Tennessee. With over 90 enrollees, the program is growing in influence and working to address the urgent need for certified community health workers in the region.

The program is based on the evidence-based Maternal/Infant Health Outreach Worker model developed by VUSN. The model prioritizes maternal and infant health and has guided over a dozen partnering agencies in CHW placement. The curriculum is adaptable to various educational settings and participants receive instruction from individuals connected to their communities.

VUSN will collaborate with the Tennessee Community Health Worker Association to build a dynamic ecosystem for CHW training. The goal is to create employment opportunities and integrate trained CHWs effectively into the health care workforce, ultimately fostering a movement toward a healthier Tennessee where community wellbeing is a shared priority.



The Community Health Worker Training Program of Tennessee focuses on increasing the quantity and quality of certified community health workers working in Tennessee. (Vanderbilt University)



Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training grant

VUSN received a \$1.5 million HRSA training grant to increase the advanced practice registered nurse behavioral health workforce in rural and underserved communities. The Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training grant gives trainees a longitudinal clinical experience in an underserved area as well as specialized training in trauma-informed care. In its first two years, the program has enrolled 59 psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner students from diverse backgrounds and is committed to creating an inclusive educational environment, emphasizing the importance of a workforce reflective of the communities it serves.

The PMHNP program is highly competitive and offers significant financial support. With clinical partnerships throughout Tennessee, students gain practical experience and clinical proficiency. The program aims to cultivate a skilled, empathetic, and enduring behavioral health workforce to meet the societal need for comprehensive mental health care.

Collaborative Academic Practice

VUSN received a \$2.6 million HRSA grant to fund its Collaborative Academic Practice trainee program through the Advanced Nursing Education Workforce program. The program focuses on increasing the number of family nurse practitioners to meet the physical and behavioral health needs of rural and underserved communities. The program has trained and mentored over 60 FNP students since its HRSA award date in 2019. Seventy-five percent of these trainees have gone on to serve in medically underserved areas, managing patients from vulnerable backgrounds with specialized skills to address social determinants of health.

HRSA has extended the program for four more years and granted \$2.6 million to expand its enrollment to include dual FNP/midwifery and adult primary care students. The program provides interdisciplinary education that shapes the future of health care in underserved communities with a commitment to excellence, compassion and innovation.

Addressing the nation's shrinking registered nurse workforce

In January 2023, VUSN welcomed its first cohort of Master of Nursing program students. These students held bachelor's degrees in subjects other than nursing but now have decided to enter the nursing profession. VUSN's new four-semester program educates them as master's-prepared registered nurses to help alleviate the nation's critical need for RNs. This innovative program—the first master of nursing degree launched in Tennessee—includes a focus on social determinants of health and health disparities.



A sexual assault nurse examiner conducts a forensic examination during simulation. (Vanderbilt University)

Empowering nurses to support survivors of sexual assault

The majority of women, children and men who are sexually assaulted have to travel out of their hometowns for treatment from someone with specialized training. Although 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men will experience an attempted or completed rape in their lifetimes, there are less than 2,200 sexual assault nurse examiners in the country.

VUSN has expanded its SANE education program, which trains advanced practice registered nurses to provide essential care to people who have been sexually assaulted. The program has received a \$1.5 million, three-year grant from HRSA, allowing VUSN to expand its curriculum to include simulations and telehealth care in low-resourced locations. Trainees can achieve clinical competencies through 40-hour clinical preceptorships at high-volume forensic nurse exam sites. Graduates of the program have obtained clinical experience in several states and those completing the SANE program practice in 18 states and Washington, D.C.

SANE-trained nurses conduct forensic examinations for assault survivors, providing better physical and mental health care, higher prosecution rates and improved evidence collection. They offer compassionate and comprehensive care, considering both the patient's acute care needs and the possible long-term effects of sexual assault. The grant continues to have a powerful impact. This year, 15 advanced practice registered nurses completed clinical immersion, 10 completed the five-day preceptorship, and one with prior SANE experience sat for a certification exam.